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Leza L Olson 10/30/2006 09:05:50 AM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

Cable  
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 04293

SIPDIS  
CXTela:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: IPSC PD IMO RES ECON DCM DAO AMB AID ADM RSO  
CONS

DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: POL:MSIEVERS  
DRAFTED: POL:SCROWLEY  
CLEARED: DAO:DOMEARA, POL:MKEAYS

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7254  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0278  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 004293

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [GM](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: GERMANS DOWNPLAYING ISRAELI ACTIONS AGAINST UNIFIL  
NAVAL VESSEL

Classified By: Political Counselor Marc Sievers; reasons 1.4 (B and D).

¶1. (C) The German DCM in Tel Aviv told poloff on October 27 that Berlin is intentionally downplaying its response to the October 24 incident in which an Israeli Air Force F-16 allegedly fired two shots across the bow of a Bundesmarine ship assisting UNIFIL. According to the DCM, German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung called his Israeli counterpart, Amir Peretz, to discuss what Jung called a "potentially dangerous incident." Jung reportedly told Peretz that the reports are particularly unhelpful in light of domestic German political opposition to participation in UNIFIL. The Embassy anticipates a similar call from General Wolfgang Schneiderhahn to LTG Dan Halutz, but that call has not yet taken place. The German DATT told DAO that he had never received expected details from the headquarters in Potsdam to assist him in making inquiries with the Israelis. The DCM did not anticipate that the Embassy would file a formal protest or present written points to the GOI. He noted that Jung will arrive in Israel for a previously planned visit on November 3.

¶2. (C) The German DCM said his Embassy had received no read-out of the Israeli response to Jung's call, but that Israeli defense contacts had told the Embassy that the GOI did not intentionally target the German ship. The Israelis reportedly claimed that the incident was the result of the complex situation along the Lebanese coast and was not in any way meant to send a message to Germany or to UNIFIL.

¶3. (C) The facts of the incident remain unclear. According to the German Embassy, six Israeli F-16 fighters approached the German ship "Alster" off of the southern Lebanese coast on October 24. One of the F-16s then flew low over the bow, allegedly engaging its weapons and defensive systems,

deploying flares, and firing two shots over the bow. The Israeli Defense Force has leaked a different version to the local press, claiming that the F-16s scrambled to intercept a helicopter near Israel's northern border, and then followed the unidentified aircraft back to the German ship, where flares -- but not offensive weapons -- were fired. (Note: The German Embassy continues to call the Alster a "support ship," although the press has noted that the OSTE-class vessel is equipped with significant ELINT capabilities).

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Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website.

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JONES